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ABSTRACT

A 10-year-old boy with inappropriate social behavior was placed in a program of positive reinforcement and response cost. The boy earned plastic coins for good behavior and lost coins for inappropriate behavior. Rewards for given levels of earnings included extra recess time and field trips. Inappropriate behaviors decreased from a mean of 6.8 times per session to 0.9 times during the first 10 days of intervention, and 2.1 times per session during the first 14 days of intervention. (LS)

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Acquisition of Appropriate Social Behaviors In a Fourth Grade Student Through the Use Of Positive Reinforcement and Response Cost

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of Education 295 concerning service to a student eligible for Special Education Services. This practicum was supervised by Margritte Graves, M.Ed.

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Introduction

Reinforcement procedures have been often shown to be an effective means for causing improvement in both academic and social behaviors of students. Bushell, Wrobel and Michaelis (1968) caused an improvement in study behavior through the use of contingent group reinforcement. McNeil, Hasazi, Muller and Knight (1972) used a collection of contingencies such as points, principal's conferences, cards sent home, self-recording and trips of the student's choice to successfully modify behavior. McKenzie, Clark, Wolf, Kothera and Benson (1968) used a token system with backup reinforces including special privileges and allowances to increase academic performance.

The purpose of this study was to demonstrate the strong positive impact that a carefully planned program can have upon a severe social behavior problem. This program provided the student with immediate feedback in the forms of both contingent reinforcement and cost response.

Student and Setting

Bill was enrolled in the fourth grade at the Hinesburg Elementary School. He was 10 years old and had an eleven year old sister. The two children lived with their lawful mother who had adopted them after their natural mother had deserted them. During the last year their mother through adoption, and her husband, became divorced which brought about the need for her to become employed on a full-time basis. For the past several months she had been ill and had little time for the children. She left for work early in the morning and retired shortly after she returned home in the evening. The children largely took care of themselves, often preparing their own meals.

Bill was referred by his team of teachers who indicated that he was "almost uncontrolable"; that he talked out boistously in class distrubing class progress; that he roamed about the room and often refused to sit at his desk; that he completed only a few of his written assignments and that when he did wish to participate in a class discussion, he would often speak out answers without raising his hand or waiting to be called upon by a teacher.

The classroom, which accomodated 45 children with their 2 teachers, was of an open-type, modern and pleasantly appointed. Occasionally the teachers divided the students into smaller

study groups by closing the folding partitions at which time Bill's behavior seemed to improve somewhat. The other children in the class could be characterized as being industious, busy, and orderly.

Instructional Objective

Given the following environments; the classroom, the library and the playground, the student will emit appropriate* behavior, on all occasions.

Measurement and Reliability Procedures

A record of each occasion appropriate and inappropriate behavior was recorded on a data sheet by one of Bill's teachers who was designated as first observer. Concurrently plastic coins were placed in a "bank type" box on his desk. All conspicuous occasions of appropriate and inappropriate behaviors were continously recorded. However, as a minimum Bill's behavior was recorded by his teacher at the end of each 20 minutes interval. The teacher's team mate served as a second observer.

Evaluation Design

An A B service design was used whereby the teachers observed the student for several sessions prior to intervention procedures (A) and then for several sessions after intervention procedures were implemented (B).

*Bill's teachers agreed upon the following definition of appropriate student behavior: (1) He will complete all assigned work each day. (2) He will sit at his desk or other proper locations designated by his teacher. (3) He will raise his hand and wait to be called upon by a teacher before speaking.

METHOD

Entry Level and Baseline

The student's teachers were asked to carefully record each occasion of his appropriate behavior for each six consecutive days. The definition of appropriate student was as cited above. The data was summarized on an appropriate tabulation sheet.

Intervention Procedures

Following referral , two meetings were held at which time Bill's teachers and the CTIT developed an intervention procedure program. The district consulting teachers reviewed and approved this program prior to its implementation. A meeting was then held with the student at which time the program was fully described to him. He looked forward to it enthusiastically and indicated his eagerness to start. It may be described as follows:

1. The student had a coin bank on his desk.
2. Fifty cents in plastic coins was placed in the bank at the beginning of each session.
3. On each occasion of good behavior, his teacher placed a 5¢ plastic coin in his bank.
4. The student earned a 15¢ check for good behavior in art class, music class, the library or his physical education class. Upon returning to his classroom he exchanged the checks for coins and deposited them in the bank.
5. On each occasion of inappropriate behavior the teacher placed a specially colored dime coin in the bank.
6. At the end of each session, i.e., 11:30 a.m. and 2:35 p.m., the plastic money was counted. The value in specially colored dimes was subtracted from the total amount.

7. Contingent upon the student's earning 75¢ during a session, he was allowed to correct papers for the teacher at the end of each morning and was allowed to help the music teacher put the instruments away after each class on the Thursday afternoons sessions. On other afternoon sessions, if he accumulated 75¢, he earned 15 minutes extra recess for his class.

8. Money earned over 75¢ a session was accumulated in a separate bank. When a total of $4.00 was reached he went on a special trip of his choice. Available special trips were, to the airport, the museum, the television station, the Burlington Freepress, the ferry boat docks and on a ferry boat ride.

RESULTS

As shown by Figure 1, during baseline conditions Bill exhibited inappropriated behaviors a mean number of 6.8 times. During the first 10 days of intervention procedures he exhibited inappropriated behaviors a mean number of 0.9 times. During the first 14 days of intervention procedures he exhibited inappropriated behaviors a mean number of 2.1 times.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of coupling reinforcement and response cost procedures to bring about a rapid change in social behaviors. Bill took a great deal of pride in his improved behavior. He was also pleased by incidental reinforcement he received as a result of frequent approval expressed by his classmates.

It should be noted that following session number 16, Bill's mother was taken to the hospital for major surgery. At this time his father returned home to take care of him and his sister. On session number 21 both children were taken to the father's home in another state.

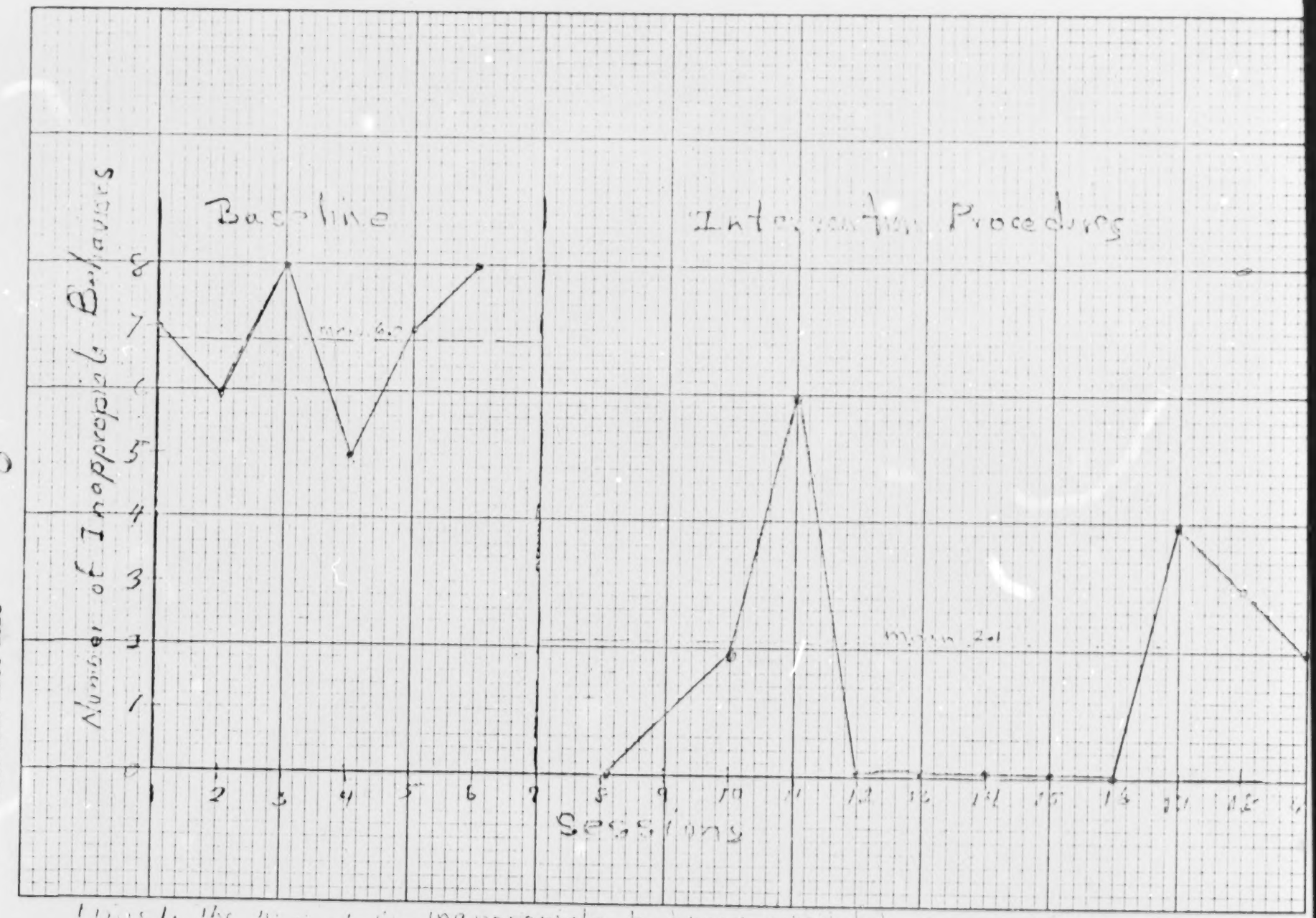

Figure 1. The number of inappropriate behavior exhibited by a student during baseline and intervention sessions.

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